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ABSTRACT

This book is an oral history of ten Chicana women ranging in ages from 84 to 24. The collection of interviews reflects how their hard work and determination have significantly changed their lives for the better. The backgrounds of the women vary; some were born in Mexico and moved to the United States. Others were born in the Southwest and later emigrated to the Midwest. They have been witnesses to the great social change that has occurred in the United States over the last 20 years. The different opinions of the women reflect the societies in which they live. These women have undertaken different occupational and professional opportunities. To accurately portray these Chicanas, their own words are reproduced as closely as possible. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and later translated into English. The women express their opinions about their religions, their families, their economic standings and many other issues. (ALL)

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CHICANAS: THEIR VOICES, THEIR LIVES

Lucía Fox Lockert

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El descanso / Resting, page 4
Unidad familiar / Family Unity, page 12
Rumbo al Norte / Going North, page 16
La pisca del tomáte / Picking Tomatoes, page 20
Las "piscas" / Working in the Fields, page 28
Madre e hijo / Mother and Child, page 34

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Bilingual/Migrant Education Program
Miguel Ruiz, Chief
Cecilia Santa Ana, Supervisor
Meredith Hines, Proofreader
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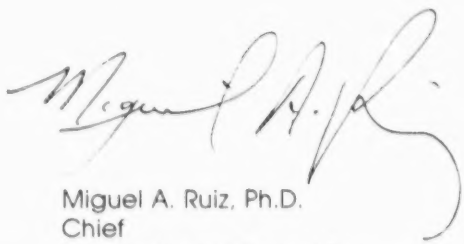
FOREWORD

The profiles contained herein are candid poetic expressions of the life experiences of ten Chicana women. The author vividly unmasks the forces which propel them to find their place in the world. Their expressions are remarkable examples of the universal human experience.

These women strive away from dependency by laboring for greater control of their environments. They strive away from isolation by finding roles within community life.

It is no minor accomplishment to maintain enthusiasm for life, indeed to sustain sanity under the social disadvantages of being both a woman and a third world minority in a patriarchal society. These women are a testimony to a bright future for the world, for in their maturity they speak more of obstacles as trials to overcome than of obstacles as overpowering events. This redeeming resiliency is the hallmark of our shared humanity.

We, too, can learn how to achieve greater control over our lives and at the same time maintain our humanity by pointing to the common quality so evident in the lives of these women. That quality is their ability to work out life problems through the use of universal logic, and it's appropriate application, that is, the ability to demystify their condition and act to affirm themselves and the ones they love in the community.



Miguel A. Ruiz, Ph.D.
Chief
Bilingual and Migrant Programs
Michigan Department of Education

PREFACE

This book is an oral history of several Chicana women who have been through some difficult and trying times. The collection of interviews reflects how their hard work and determination have significantly changed their lives for the better. Some of the women interviewed were born in Mexico and moved to the United States during the Mexican Revolution. Others were born in the Southwest and later emigrated to the Midwest and established themselves here permanently. They have been witnesses to the great social change that has occurred in the United States over the last twenty years. It is interesting to compare the different opinions of the women with regards to the society in which they live. It is also important to note the different occupational and professional opportunities that have been undertaken by these women.

The only way to accurately portray the Chicana is to reproduce, as closely as possible, her own words about her life. The stereotypes that have been, and continue to be, propagated by the mass media never allow the true 'psyche' of the Chicana to be probed. She has inherited Latin American values, but has also acquired many Anglo values through the educational system. This duality at times causes the Chicana to question her roots and her true identity. After reading each of these short biographies, it is clear that many of the women had to find their own way in life. Although being mothers and having extended families are important values in the Chicanas' lives, their frustration at the traditional values of a patriarchal system are also quite apparent. These women are twice oppressed: they are Mexicans and they are women.

The ages of the women interviewed vary from 84 to 24, spanning three generations. They have expressed their opinions about their religions, their families, their economic standings and many other issues. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and were later translated into English.

This study was made possible by a Grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following is some background information about the editor, Lucía Fox Lockert and Nora Chapa Mendoza, the artist who kindly contributed the illustrations in this book.

Lucía Fox Lockert

"Her special gift of sensitivity and her dedication to the Arts have made her a magnetic center for artistic expression in Michigan." This was said by a peer of our Diana recipient, a woman who has received many awards for her contributions to literature—a writer of twenty three books, numerous short stories, and several dramas.

Her career began at the age of fifteen with her first book of poetry, written and published in her native country of Peru. She holds a Ph.D. in Spanish from the University of Illinois and has distinguished herself as a lecturer and writer and poet of internationally recognized stature. More than a decade ago, the Brown University Library began collecting her manuscripts.

She is a professor at Michigan State University in the Department of Romance and Classical Languages, and teaches courses in Latin American Culture and People and Latin American Literature.

A renowned critic herself, she has been acclaimed critically as well as professionally. She won the Michigan Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Grant in 1981 and the National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Grant in 1982. She received the Palmas Magisteriales del Peru in 1984 and the Michigan State University Woman Achiever Award in 1985.

In her essays, there is an ardent and dignified appeal for the rights of women. She has devoted much of her scholarly research to Chicano issues and Hispanic women, and is a consultant for the local publication, "Labyris," a feminist arts journal. She has also written for "Festival" and has contributed numerous articles to "El Renacimiento." A critic wrote, "The varied production of Lucía Fox—not only in poetry but in several plays and numerous critical essays—has been characterized by an almost heroic defense of

the condition of the woman and her underprivileged status in society."

As with all of our "Diana" awardees, this recipient has given a considerable amount of time serving civic, community and professional endeavors.

She has been involved in activities directed toward increasing the awareness of the Hispanic population in the arts and social issues that are relevant to our community, and is dedicated to the educational status of Hispanics in Michigan. This dedication is reflected in the associations to which she is committed, representing her department at M.S.U. in CHISPA, the Spanish Club; the Organizations of Women for International Development and the Latin American Center of International Programs. She is a member of the Institute for Minority Studies, and has worked with the Task Force on Hispanic American Arts and the Hispanic Media Association of Lansing. This advocate for women's rights and for the advancement of Hispanics, who has found a way to express her feelings for both in her own literature, is a proponent for the writings of others, editing a yearly book called "Poetry Festival," which is published by the Society of Mid-Western Literature.

She is the recipient of the "1988 Martin Luther King Jr., Ceasar Chavez, Rosa Parks visiting Professor Program" at Northern Michigan University.

The following is a list of **Lucia Fox Lockert's** books:

Preludios íntimos (Lima: Editorial Condor, 1945). Poetry.

Ensayos hispanoamericanos (Caracas: Garcia Hermanos, 1965). Essays.

Imágenes de Caracas (Caracas: Garcia Hermanos, 1965), Poetry.

Tragaluz (Los Angeles: Ediciones La Frontera, 1967). Poetry.

Redes (Barcelona: Ediciones Carabela, 1968). Poetry.

Tiempo atonal (E. Lansing: Ghost Dance, 1969). Poetry.

Múltiples (E. Lansing: Ghost Dance, 1969). Poetry.

Aceleración múltiple (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1969). Poetry.

La odisea del pájaro (Bilbao: Empresas Editoras, 1972). Poetry.

El rostro de la patria en la literatura peruana (Buenos Aires: Ediciones continente, 1970). Essays.

Latinoamérica en evolución (E. Lansing: Superspace, 1974). Poetry and prose.

Mosaicos (Spanish edition) (E. Lansing: Argonauta, 1974). Poetry.

Monstruous aereos, terrestres y submarinos (E. Lansing: Superspace, 1974). Poetry.

Assemblage: Lucía Fox in Translations (E. Lansing: Superspace, 1977). Poetry.

Constelación (E. Lansing: Shamballa Publications, 1978). Poetry.

El Perfil desnudo E. Lansing: Shamballa Publications, 1978). Play.

Leyendas de una princesa india (E. Lansing: Shamballa Publications, 1979). Poetry.

Women Novelists in Spain and Spanish America (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1979). Research.

Un cierto lugar (Lima: C. Salesiano, 1980). Short stories.

Ayer es nunca jamás (Lima: C. Salesiano, 1980). Plays.

Formas / Forms (E. Lansing: Shamballa Publications, 1985). Poetry. Feminist Centers in Lima, Peru (Submitted for consideration). Research.

Chicanas: Their Voices, Their Lives (Lansing: Michigan State Board of Education, 1988) Poetry and research.

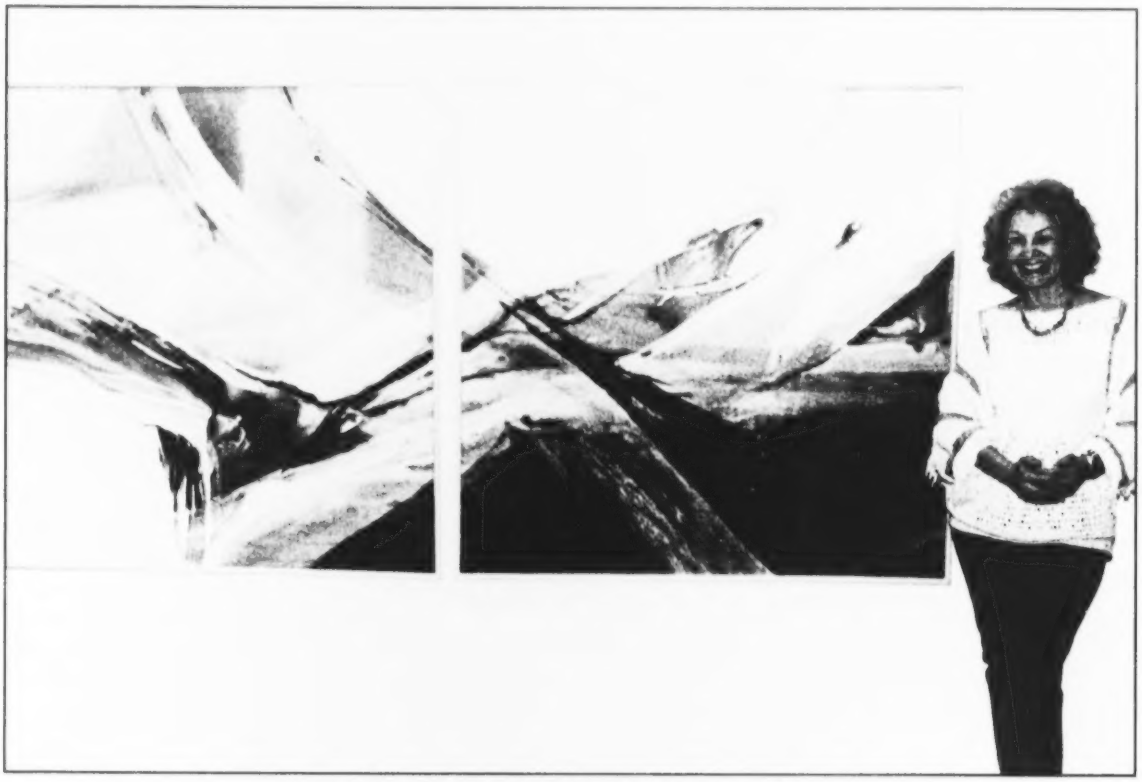
Nora Chapa Mendoza

Nora Chapa Mendoza has given Lucia Fox Lockert permission to reproduce eight of her paintings that illustrate the life of Migrant Workers. Recognized as an artist and a champion of Hispanic Art, she was one of eight Oakland County women named by Paula Blanchard as a recipient of the "Michigan 150 First Lady Award" in honor of the state sesquicentennial.

Nora Chapa Mendoza was born in Weslaco, Texas to Mexican-born parents. As a small child she worked in the Texas cotton fields with the rest of her family. After she married, her husband came to Detroit for his medical internship and sent for her in 1953. She studied art at the Center for Creative Studies, Mercy and Madonna Colleges.

Now divorced, she said: "My career has taken off in the last five or six years. I have

been painting since I was a little kid and for a long time I treated it as a hobby. I started to make a living at it after 1975." She participates in workshops for young artists as part of Latino Outreach. She also speaks to high school and college groups that include Hispanics. "I noticed the Hispanic kids sat around huddled. They sit up straight when I talk about Hispanic Art. There is pride. They think, 'that's our people!' It gives them a role model, gives them hope . . ."



Nora Chapa Mendoza with her work

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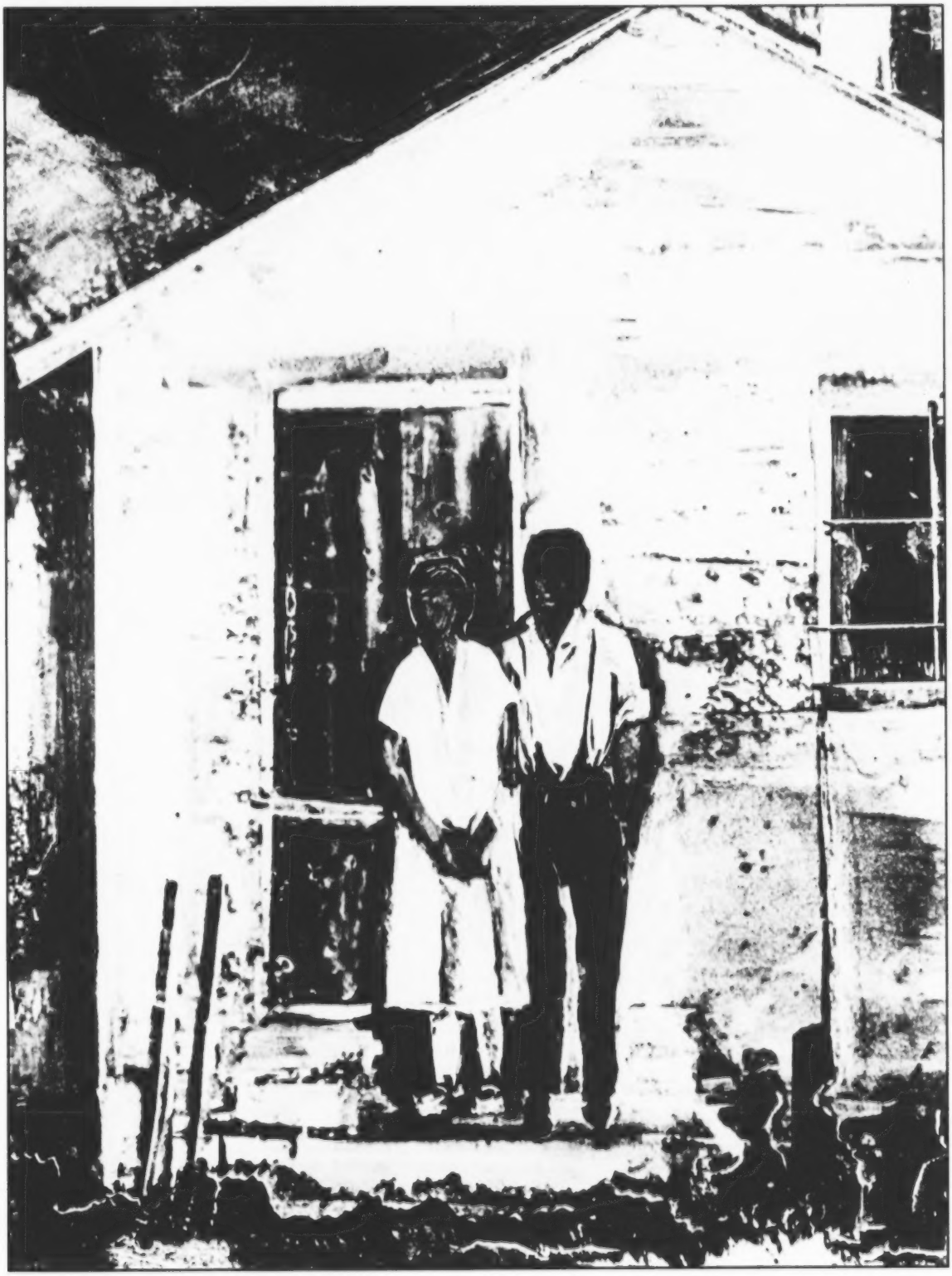


ESPERANZA

I. They ought to call me live-in maid. I have done everything; washing, cooking, raising 14 kids. I have worked in the fields in Mexico and the United States. My pop was a dairy man, a dark man. I've worked hard since I was a child. We were poor but very close. Even now when we go to visit relatives in Mexico, in Torreon, after all these years, they give us the only egg they have in the house. They are isolated in the mountains, and we had to walk a long way from the bus stop.

II. I don't really know where these memories come from. I never knew my grandmothers, but I knew grandpa Eugenio—he died when he was 92. He never used glasses or a cane, but he had worn down all his teeth. I had many brothers and sisters and we suffered a lot during the years of Revolution. Oh, dear Lord! What haven't I seen! Men hanging from the trees, and others on the ground—the coyotes ate them. When I went for firewood I saw them. Since we were so poor there was nothing they could steal from us. But the revolutionaries took everything from the rich looting the stores and the houses. They even killed the Chinamen—because they had a little something. In those days, we didn't know why we were suffering. We only knew our bodies hurt. I pity the innocents that died of hunger, like my little brother Dario, some days there was food, some days nothing.

III. My mother had sixteen children. She died when I was eight, of hard work, hunger, and need. All of them are dead now. Some died as children, some in the revolution, others of old age. I was raised by my older sister Pablita. One day when I peed blood, I was afraid, but my mama Pablita explained that it was from the flowering of my heart.

IV. I knew my sweetheart when we were little, in the same town. We never courted. I never had time to be going out. I went to wash by the river and he used to bring his donkey there for water while they were working. He gave me a white handkerchief, my girlfriend said it meant that he loved me. I married so young. We ran off together and made our home. Later on we were married, for the family. We had a whole year speaking with polite, respectful forms. That was the custom. None of that kissing. My marriage might have come from heaven—it turned out to be very good, as they say; you can't escape Fate (Destiny). But my mother-in-law was mean to me. I lived with her for seven years, crying and crying. God forgive her, she was only human. In those times, the custom was that the man brought his wife to his mother's home so that she could torture and scold her. I had to make the tortillas, feed the animals—but my mother-in-law still said: Don't give all your money and your love to your wife. But, for her part, she liked to go out. She had time to talk to the neighbors, but I never went around gossiping. A girlfriend gave me a picture of the Virgin of Refuge. I knelt and prayed "Give me patience to endure one more blow." One day when my mother-in-law was going to hit me, my husband said, "Mama, don't hit her," so she threw us out. Her sister said we could come to her place in Laredo. My husband asked his mother's permission, and she refused. Finally, we went—in 1924. Mexico was peaceful by then, but before I knew women who were commanders: Petra Herrera, Maria Cadena, they were fiesty and spirited, and had their own followers. They knew no fear. Other women were only good for stealing boots from the dead.

V. In Laredo there were lots of campbosses hiring laborers for the fields. We became pickers, working very hard. We had to pick sweet potatoes and weed them on our knees. When I got home I made a dough while my daughter peeled potatoes. I boiled up the beans, and we ate. There were many Poles—very fine people—they even helped deliver my babies. I never learned English, I take the blame for that. My husband was strict, and my children turned out very respectful. None of them drink too much, I am so proud to know I have a good family.

VI. Later my husband got work in a factory in Detroit. At one time he was out on strike for 11 months. During W.W.II my oldest son was in the service while my husband worked in the steel mills. He got sick and was never strong after that. He used to say: "The real work isn't in making money, but in keeping it." If I didn't know him well enough to love him at first, after fifty years of marriage I really love him. We loved each other as if he was my father and I was his mother. We never could sleep apart. He was not much for dances; I don't know about women—maybe in his youth. I don't understand why men go wild about a woman—what one has, the others have too. We were very close in our poverty.

VII. My husband never lost consciousness before he died from diabetes. When we got to the hospital, he accepted that that was it. Where do people go when they die? Well, wherever God wants them. I only go to church when it gets warm out, but I believe in God our Father. Of course during the revolution many people burned churches, but they didn't do it because they were bad—it was just a mob, followers of Villa or Zapata. As for us, we just wanted to stay alive, we never followed anybody. But my brother Francisco was taken into a troop—they followed Pancho Villa. He went to Mexico City, that's where he died. He never sent letters, but we knew because a girl who God blessed with the gift of spirits told us. My brother Dario went to see her, he said, "We want to know about Francisco—where is he?" He felt the hand of a man and a voice that said "My brother, how are you? I am in the mansions of our Lord." "How did you get there?" "I was hung. But I'm in the mansion. Don't disturb me." I never have been afraid of dead people, and have been with many at their death. Once an old woman that lived alone borrowed two boards from me. I laid her out on them. Another old blind lady, too. Once a man was dying of colic. I gave him an herb—I wonder what he ate to make him sick? Don't ask me who is more powerful: God or the Devil. Only the Protestants know those answers. In the old times, where I was raised, they believed in sorcery. If you ask me, I would tell you that it's real. There was a witch called Sabel, they said she made people crazy. Her daughter-in-law, Nisia, was a very pretty girl, she made her crazy and sent her back to her mother. My mother-in-law was a good friend of that witch. My mama Pablita warned her: "The day that this one is hurt will be your last day."

VIII. My children never missed a day of school even though they had to walk half a mile in the snow. You have to think ahead. Later they continued their studies with scholarships or even without them. Most of my daughters married, and later some got teaching certificates. One of them got pregnant first, when she was away on vacation. It was hard on my husband, and one of the smart-aleck sisters told her to put the baby up for adoption. I talked to her on the phone: "You are not the first one or the last to do this thing; you didn't steal, you didn't kill. You don't have to ask our pardon, only God's. This child has to come to us, and I promise as your mother that I will take care of you both." I thank God that I have such good, beautiful children. Out of my fourteen children, there are three sons and six daughters left. If all of them had lived, I would be rich. Whenever I need them, all my children flock home. I promised God that I would be the best mother-in-law, and I got such nice sons and daughters-in-law. Praise God, who taught me how to be a woman.

2. El descanso / Resting, painting by Nora Mendoza

ROSARIO

I. It seems that as a child I always had very painful experiences. My brother and I were raised without a father, and my mother tried to make sure we would not grow up rebellious and undisciplined.

I remember while we were still living together as a family. I was only four years old, but I remember the house clearly, and the school, too.

When I was around four or five, I found a little branch in the alley. I made a hole and planted it. When we went back there, that branch was a big tree. It was a beautiful experience.

II. Detroit was a mixture of many nationalities then. Now there are more Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Mother always talked to us in Spanish, and so did my father's mother, who lived on the second floor with my cousins. Mother was expecting a child. I remember two babies that died; one was only two months old. My two cousins had boyfriends. They sat and talked in the living room, but they could never go out alone. Of course they married them later on. My father went into the army, and my cousins served in the Pacific and the Atlantic. I remember that because they both were wounded.

III. When I was little, I was deaf. I had mastoid infections, and they opened my ears to drain them, so I could not hear. I could not hear music, but grandmother had a big old radio with speakers to the floor, and I could feel the vibrations on their cloth. My father finally came home—I remember him telling my mother that he was going to leave her, and she cried. I could hear everything clearly then, and I started talking then. I never talked baby-talk, but started talking like an adult. Then my mother told my father, "We can't argue in front of her. She can hear everything now."

IV. I was four years old, and my brother was two. My cousin brought us toys from Japan, and we were playing together. My brother was mischievous, but not a bad boy. My grandmother was too strict, and punished him harshly. Sometimes she told him that she didn't love him. Often she sent him to a dark room on the third floor, where the mice were. The little fellow screamed and screamed. I never forgave my grandmother for that. Although I was the darling of the house, and they never punished me, I have always hated any kind of injustice in any situation: between parents and children, or races. We all have to face adversity, one way or the other—that's how we build character. I am happy that so many bad things happened in the first seven years of my life. Maybe it was hard, but it forced me to see things clearly. I used to be a real tyrant, but I'm changing that now—now I'm one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and I know I have to go on improving my character. While I was growing up my mother wouldn't let me go out, but my brother had more freedom. I used to listen to the news on the radio a lot—about the Korean War. I asked myself how the Koreans could survive that cold winter. So I started to read history about people in other times and places. I also thought about being a foreigner—although my brother and I were born in this country. My mother was born in Mexico, and we were raised in a Mexican neighborhood. People were different then—they called us Mexicans, retards, and fools. They used to call us names, "Dumb-ass" even in the school: that was the worst part of it. My poor brother was affected. Poor boy, he lived alone with two women trying not to let the environment defeat him. From the school days I knew we came in several colors. After I was seven, we lived in a place where there were Italians, Poles, Maltese, and others. Detroit was a city of immigrants. You saw Moslem women with their baggy pants and Hindu ladies with saris near Wayne State University.

V. When my mother and father divorced, we went to the heart of the Mexican barrio. First we went to Catholic grade school, and the nuns separated the boys on one side of the room and the girls on the other side. The nuns kept good discipline, fighting was not allowed. Later we went to public school. My teacher was a good woman, but she was as cold as the nuns.

The nuns were never generous or talkative. Now I guess there's as many discipline problems in the Catholic schools as in the public ones. Once I drove a school bus; I had to pick up kids from the Catholic school, and they had good manners but the same attitudes as those in the public schools. The only difference was that they had learned to be hypocrites. I don't know which is worse: to be openly rebellious, or to be hypocritical. There were three black boys; good friends, who always sat together. The Anglo boys were mean to them and called them ugly names. At the end of the school year one of the black boys took a pipe and was going to beat them. I had to take that pipe away from him, and make him sit back down. It took a lot of courage. I didn't think about them being bigger and stronger than me, but I was that way when I got riled up. Now I've changed a lot.

VI. There are really more civil rights now, but there is also an undercurrent of hostility. Everybody thinks, "You're no better than me." This is a very dangerous attitude. It leads to resentment instead of love. It's like saying, "I have rights, whether you like it or not! Who are you to tell me differently?" Living in the Mexican barrio you knew what to expect. But there were still things that could be better. Hispanics tend to think the worst of their neighbors. Like in Mexico, everything has a hidden meaning. The neighbors were always gossiping about things they knew nothing about. That's why my mother liked to keep to herself. She was never a gossip, she had no time or use for it. She didn't feel superior to the others, but she had her values. I remember when mother was working in the restaurant, there was a sixteen-year-old orphan boy. He became attached to her—although my mother doesn't show her feelings, you know she feels things deeply. She's not a flatterer, but that young boy felt secure because she was compassionate and cared about whether he had enough to eat or not. He wanted to come to live with us, and be like her son. I did too, I wanted a big brother. But she said, "No. People would never leave us alone, because a woman alone can't take a young man in without causing a lot of slanderous talk." Mother was a good-looking woman then, even though the stroke had twisted her face. People said things about her, but I knew they weren't true because she came straight home from work and she never went around with men.

VII. My mother was always strict with me; I could not go out with my friends, or go to dances. In the first place, we were very poor, and she didn't want me to have impossible dreams. She said that just because we were poor that didn't mean we should go out with frivolous young people who couldn't take anything seriously. Mother talked to us about things on the radio, happenings of the day, and took us to the library, the museum and to two different religious services on Sunday. Mother liked reading and music, and she taught us that way.

VIII. When I finished high school I went to Mexico to study at a teacher's college, where my uncle was the director—my father's brother. That way I could live with his sister-in-law, but eat with him and his family while I went to school. He was married to an Otomi Indian woman, and had twelve or fourteen children with her. I had been very sheltered, and I had to learn many new things. My mother never encouraged me to make my decisions, so I had to face school and all those different people at the same time. I was especially afraid of the Indian woman, my aunt's sister, with whom I stayed. I couldn't talk to her. Otomi Indians only talked to people of their own age—never to young people. My uncle was twenty years older than his wife. He was not tyrannical, just indifferent. His wife had a lot of respect for him. The Otomi's are a very proud people. My aunt's sister and I never hit it off. Once I got my uncle's permission to go to a party with a family of Jehovah's Witnesses. When we arrived late, she had locked the door and wouldn't let me in. She locked the door at ten every night, and this was between ten thirty and eleven at night. I had to sleep at the other family's house. We all slept on the floor in one big room. The next day the Jehovah's Witness family went to talk to the Otomi woman into letting me back in. I think my uncle talked to her too. She gave me ugly looks. The next day I guess I went to school as usual, but I noticed how she treated me.

I had a hard time in school. Although I could generally follow what was said, I didn't understand what I read. I didn't have a big vocabulary. I was studying thirteen subjects, and the other students could memorize everything. According to that system, I was lacking some high school subjects. But I couldn't attend high school classes, and I couldn't work either, because I had taken all college-prep classes in high school—no typing or practical classes. Later on, back in the States, I learned how to type and became a secretary. My dream when I was in high school was to go to Germany—I saw all those boats in the Detroit River from far away—I even studied German in high school by myself, but my parents didn't want me to go there, so they sent me to Mexico. I wrote to my grandparents in Mexico City and told them I was lonely, and asked them to come and see me. My grandfather came and said, "Little one, you don't belong in that house, come home to us." So I told my uncle and the minister of Jehovah's Witnesses there, and I took one suitcase and left the other one there, so the Otomi woman would not suspect that I was gone for good. I was a coward to the end.

IX. That's how I got to Mexico City. At first my grandparents didn't let me go out unless someone from the family was with me. But when they saw that I was a serious girl, and I wasn't about to run off with any man, or let anyone bother me, they let me do their shopping. I had to go down the hill to the stores—getting little parts for Grandfather's projects. I made friends with the Witnesses in Mexico City, and my grandfather trusted them.

My mother's stepmother was a peddler in the street market. At first she was ashamed to have me know that, she thought it was a low occupation, but I wanted to go out selling with her. I knew they all did what they could with the abilities they had. The women have always supported us in my family. I told my grandmother, "If you teach me, I can learn how to work." I learned a lot. I never knew how to talk to people before, I didn't know how to deal with them. But I learned how to get along with people then. Every morning she carried three big boxes and took them to different markets in the city. She worked so hard. I saw that what my mother always said was true: "Those who cannot work with their heads, use their hands and backs and work like mules." In this country I have seen women, like my mother, always working very hard. But that was because they have been abandoned by their husbands. But in Mexico all of the women from poor areas had to go out to work, and the children had to help them. Now I think that life can be hard, but you can be happy even if you are poor, as long as you don't have other problems. I was happy there. My uncles, grandfather's youngest sons, were about the same age as me. We played and fought like brothers and sister. The youngest one teased me so much that I threw a brick at him one day. I was lucky that it didn't hit him.

One time my grandmother left me alone with all the merchandise, she had to go to the bathroom. Somebody came to buy an apron. I didn't know the prices, and I named a high price. He said, "Do you think I have the face of a rich man?" All the other people in the market laughed, they always enjoyed the things I got myself into. At first they didn't trust me, because they thought all the Mexicans who had lived in the States looked down on the people back in Mexico. But when they got to know me, they realized that I was just like them. Poor people are looked down on all over the world. But they gave me a lot of love. They were good people.

There were Jehovah's Witnesses there, but they had problems in the Catholic society. Once the Catholics were persecuted in Mexico, but now they have power again. Anyone who doesn't agree with them is persecuted.

X. After five months in Mexico City, I began asking myself whether I was really Mexican or American. The people at the border didn't know, either, and made me show notarized legal papers. It wasn't until I moved to Lansing that I really learned to live with Anglos. In Texas, Detroit, California, or Mexico I always lived with Spanish-speaking people. There were many changes during those seven years in Lansing. My brother brought us here, out of the barrio, and introduced us to the new customs and new way of eating. He said, "The barrio is not the only world." I thought I had very wide geographical interests before, but as for living with other

people, I was very timid. I only knew the difference between people who had money and could do anything and the rest of us. My mother raised us with strong values, but that didn't help us much then, because rich people don't recognize spiritual values, and I didn't know how to use my values then. There wasn't much of a difference between families in the barrio—nobody had any money to speak of, they were all in the same boat. Now I was learning a new way of living. I couldn't describe it all first, because mother always said that the rich people were all tyrants that wanted to keep the poor people down, which I still believe. I didn't know what to expect. Afterwards I came to realize that not all Anglos were "rich" as I thought them to be, nor were all tyrants.

XI. My father left the barrio many years before, and owned his own little business. He had a new wife and children. A lot of Mexicans think that poverty comes with life in the barrio—my brother says that to live in the barrio is to become poor again, to take a step back. We were insecure when we first left it, but my religion and its people gave us a strong security. To me, living is learning; anyone who doesn't learn goes nowhere. But I'm most interested in spiritual values. When I was seventeen, I learned about racism, and started making separations, although unconsciously. But now I look at people differently, and I feel better about it.

XII. Once I had a tumor on my hand, and they thought it was cancer when I went to the hospital. I thought it was pretty bad, but I wasn't afraid. The Bible says that dying is to sleep. Most people believe that the soul goes somewhere else at death, but according to the Scriptures, if we do the best we can according to God's will, then He will reward us with eternal life. Resurrection will come in God's due time. I said to God, "If I have done your will, I will have a resurrection, but if not, what could I possibly do about it now?" When the nurses came in after the operation, I asked, "Do I have a hand or not?" The nurse said, "Baby, it's all there."

XIII. Without the Jehovah's Witnesses I would have become a militant. Before becoming one of Jehovah's Witnesses I thought that force was the only way to get justice. When I was 11 or 12, I remember seeing a program about the Korean War, and I thought that force was the way to fix everything. I even thought of becoming a guerrilla, and going to Mexico where they had some guerrilla warfare.

At the end of the Vietnam War, the Chicanos formed the Brown Berets. Before that, the word Chicano was low and vulgar, like a curse. It surprised me when they called the movement by that name. I didn't join the movement—I'm not political, now I am ruled by spiritual laws. I believe there are other ways to correct injustices. Above all, I believe that only God can really and permanently eliminate injustice. I think it's human greed that causes oppression and abuse. The most important change in my life was finding out what love is. Love of God is universal. Jesus Christ said, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." If we learn to do that, injustice disappears.

XIV. Now I don't feel alone. I have read your book* and know that there are other women who, like myself, felt frustrated in a society that didn't accept them because they are not married, because they didn't want to make fools of themselves for the sake of a man. I am the way I am, I am independent, I like to work, I like to be able to say what I feel without hypocrisy. I began to think about other cases that I knew about. When I read your book I did more than just read it.

*Lucía-Fox-Lockert's *Women Novelists in Spain and Spanish America.*

FRANCISCA

I. There were three girls in my family; I was the second. I was born in Texas, near Corpus Christi. I hardly remember my mother's death; she had pneumonia that lasted three weeks. When she died, my father thought we would be better off living with my aunt, who had children of her own. At first I never considered what effect this would have on my life. Before we had a nice house, and my father had a place on a ranch, but after mother died he lost that job. I began to notice the change when I had to work in the kitchen and do chores I never did before. My sisters and I lived with my aunt and her family for many years. She was very strict with us. She let us know that the man was the head of the house, and what he says is law. I liked to sing and dance, but that was never allowed because my aunt said it was "immoral." My aunt was a fanatic in her view of the world. We never went out. We weren't gadabouts, so the community respected us. When my father went blind, I went to take care of him. I don't know how I found out about the money for blind people—but I got him a pension. Later, I got married and went to live with my husband. He also thought that women were to keep house. I went along with whatever he said. My oldest boy was born in Texas, but then my husband thought it would be better to live away from family interference, and we came to Michigan. Here my ten other children were born.

II. My husband got a job with General Motors; he worked there until he died. I never worked when my children were small—my husband did not approve of that. So I busied myself with the activities in the Church of the Resurrection, the Mexican Patriotic Committee, and the celebration of the festival of the Virgin of Guadalupe. At first I worked as a volunteer in the church; I did everything from cooking to singing at mass. But afterwards a new government project came, and they paid me for that work. From then on, I worked every day until two o'clock in the afternoon. Around then a new steel mill opened up, and a lot of Mexicans came to work there. The neighborhood filled up with Mexicans. There was a time when it seemed like everyone spoke Spanish. One day I got a note from the school telling me the children should only speak English. After 1960 things changed again, and the bilingual program came in.

Everything is changing now—when the kids are sixteen, if they don't want to go to school, they don't go. So the Cristo Rey Center was established to help them get jobs. People with money problems want their children to get jobs. Other people are on welfare and they have a hard time getting off it. There isn't enough work, and they don't want much education. We gave workshops on how people can take control of their own lives. The Macho image is more predominant down south than it is here. But there are some men that have never changed. We have abortion and birth control, but the Chicanos don't use them, so they have lots of children.

III. I always wanted to do things that my aunt would not allow—but I argued with her. She called me "the lawyer." I argued with my husband a lot too. It was in my nature to be free, to accomplish things. But he didn't let me. He believed in the Macho image—the man could go out whenever he wanted, but not the woman. In spite of the arguments, we never separated. I ran the house, and he gave me money. But I didn't like the idea that he spent the money we needed at home. Education was always important to me, and I wanted my children to have a good education. My only daughter went to a private Catholic school because their education was better. They have more discipline, and demand respect. All my sons went to public school, and then into the service, the university, or to work. Since I started working at Cristo Rey, I have realized how much you can learn by working with people. In that center there's always something going on and we are counseling young people, or finding work for them. Now I have to deal with the agencies, too, that give grants for community programs. I talk to many people, even congressmen. I feel good, participating in this kind of work.

I left the Church of the Resurrection when Cristo Rey was established. We didn't have to pay the priest then, and the work was with poor people. But the Bishop and some other people, who were rich and didn't live near there, wanted to create another Cristo Rey, and started asking everybody for donations. I was the president of the committee of the original Cristo Rey, and I was opposed to that idea. They were asking for big pledges, and I told them, "Those people are very poor. They have nothing but the roof over their heads. How can they pay that much?" Anyhow, they built the other church, and we poor folks stayed where we were. There were also some nuns who wanted to live in the area to work with the poor people, but, since the Bishop wouldn't give any authorization, our committee went and bought a home for them, with a lot of resistance from the diocese.

Women will always give support, you can depend on them. Those nuns still live in the community, paying their rent with the money they earn working at other jobs. Since they don't belong to the diocese, just to their own community, they can live wherever they want.

What we need is unity. If the Hispanic people are separated, how can we be strong? We don't have leaders like the blacks do. If we were united like them we could get more support. I'm afraid that all the support is ending now. Politics changes everything. That man has already taken away our support.

I hope the young ones don't all go away to other states. Who would have ever thought things would get so bad in Michigan?

Unidad familiar/Family Unity, by Nora Mendoza

MERCEDES

I. My father was named Juan. At eighteen years of age he said to his blind old father, "Shake my hand. This is goodbye!" He had no mother to say goodbye to: she had abandoned the family many years before. My aunt was married to an army man, she would take care of her father. When my father took the train to New Laredo, even though the Revolution was over, his young bride was afraid whenever a soldier came into the car.

II. I was born in San Antonio, Texas. There is only one bridge in Laredo, Texas and my parents crossed that bridge to go to work. But one day the guard at the border asked them for their papers. They didn't have any. While they were waiting for the papers to come, my parents put me in a boarding school with Mexican nuns. I was afraid they would leave me there. The nuns were impatient with me, they burnt all my dolls once, because they had breasts.

III. Finally we could cross the bridge together, and so we came to Michigan to work in the sugar beets. My parents worked together in the fields, but I was sent to school. I was ten years old that June, but I still didn't know any English. Although I was in third grade with the nuns, they put me in kindergarten. It was just a one-room school for children of the farmers. Once a week one of our mothers had to cook for everybody. My mother was the best cook because in Laredo she had worked for a wealthy Mexican lady, and she could cook anything.

IV. My father always wanted to go back to Mexico, up to the day he died. During the Revolution he and his sister had helped Villa. Both of them were from Parral where Villa was from. They were very Mexican. His sister wrote, "This is your land, not there." Because of this, when my father made me read history books, he told me, "They talk bad about the Mexicans, they don't like us." One day we returned to Mexico and they put me in school, in fifth grade. He said, "You see how God provides for us?"

V. In Grand Ledge, Michigan I went to a school that had eight grades and thirty students: all in one room. The teacher liked me and put me in all the plays. She encouraged me to learn English. We came to work back in Michigan. My father got a job as a night watchman. My parents sacrificed to put me in a private Catholic school. Although we lived in one room, education was very important for my father. He used to tell me, "You might lose everything else, but no one can take away your learning." My father liked to talk about many things, he liked to take the opposite side in any argument to teach me that everyone doesn't think alike. My mother was a simple woman, who did the housework, making sure everything was just right, and she never argued with Dad.

VI. My husband's family came to Michigan in 1952; (we came in 1946). He graduated when he was twenty years old, and I was nineteen. We glanced at each other at the dances, but until we married we never did anything. We went to the five o'clock show so we could get home early. My father allowed him to visit me when we got engaged. I was ready to graduate from high school when a nun asked me. "What are you gong to do next year?" I knew we were poor, and I had not made any plans, but she encouraged me to apply for a competitive scholarship for a religious college in Chicago. I took second place, but since the first place winner wanted to be a nurse, I got to go to the university.

VII. I really wanted to go into science, but what I studied was accounting and shorthand. When I was at school I thought I was very intelligent, but everybody was intelligent at college. There were girls from Puerto Rico, and even the Dominican Republic, most of them were wealthy, very few on scholarship like me. The nuns liked the rich ones best,

the poor ones were diamonds in the rough. They all wanted me to be a teacher, but my heart wasn't in it. I wanted to help my parents, and after one year I didn't go back. When I told my father I was going to work, he asked, "Why? Don't you have everything you need?" Mother had always worked cleaning houses, and I guess that what Dad didn't like was my being independent. I still took courses at night. One night a man chased me, and I was afraid. I quit going to college. We lived far away from the bus line. Many years later, I finished college. I was already married, with four children. But my husband encouraged me to take some education courses. Later on I took more courses and got a counseling degree.

VIII. In the seventies there was a great conflict between the Chicano students and the school administrators. The Chicanos went on strike, and I did too. I didn't care whether I lost my job. The students complained that a teacher hit a student, but that brought out a lot of other things. In my husband's office and at home the Chicano students gathered. I thought they were better off there than in the streets. I asked my bosses, "What use am I as a counselor, if I abandon the students when they need me?" They understood, and did not fire me.

My husband and I are very active in the Chicano groups, and my dining room is too small for all the people who come over every Sunday. My husband says we should knock down a wall to make it bigger, and I agree.

IX. When I got married, my sister's son came to live with us. Although he was already thirteen years old, my husband loved him like a son. Although the policemen said he was a "juvenile delinquent," he was a son to us, even though he took off with the car when we slept. My parents raised my sister's other two sons. She had twelve children. They lived in Texas and had a lot of problems. The oldest boy that stayed with my parents went to college, and turned out to be very successful. The other one works in a factory. The youngest, that lived with us, hasn't had any major problems for fifteen years. Now he works for my husband. My house is the family center. Both sides come on Sundays, because I work and we have the means, we can have everyone over more often.

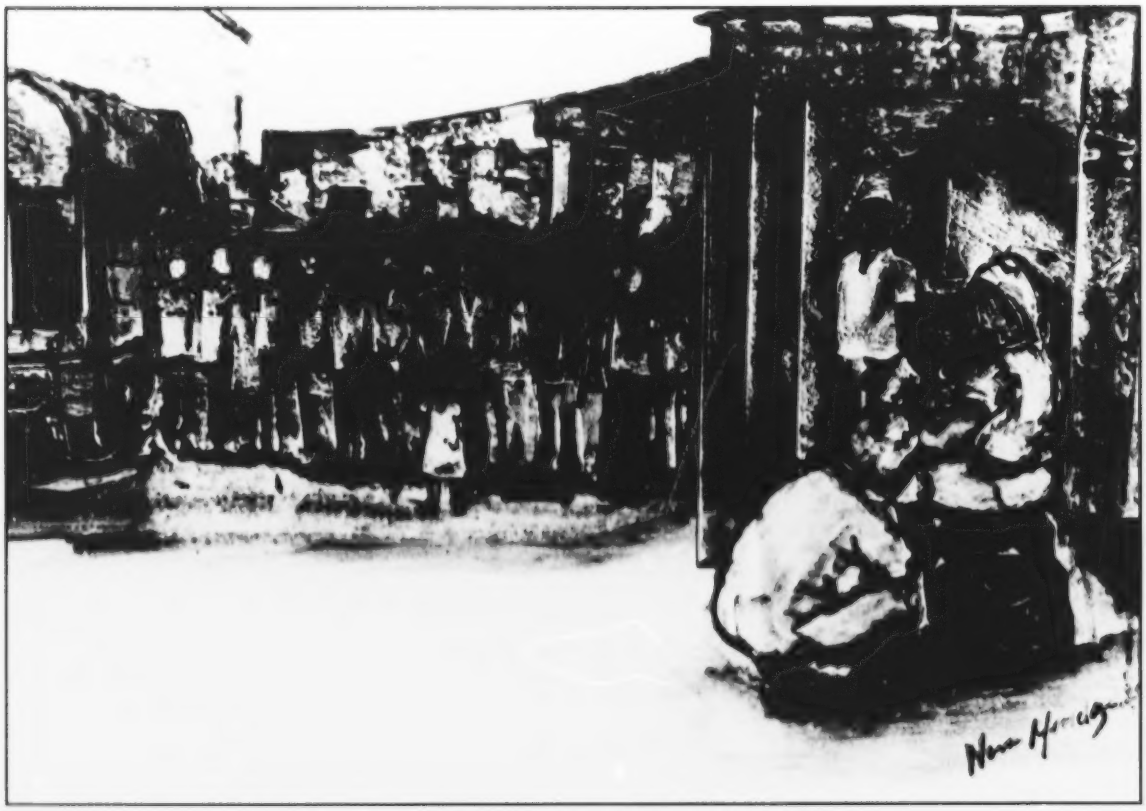
When we were married twenty-six years ago, we put all of our savings into this house. My four children were born here. Although this house is far from the barrio, that doesn't stop everyone from coming here. On weekends my four nephews come here. They go to mass with us, and they don't fight like they do at home. My daughter loses patience with them, "What are they doing here? Don't they have a home?" I answer, "They are safe here. They don't have to be out on the street." My eighty-year-old mother lives with us, too. I also take care of my neighbor's girl after school. My neighbor is divorced. I believe in helping people. With my own children and nephews, we have seven in the house; that's a lot. My daughter comes home weekends from medical school in Detroit. When she gets fed up with the confusion, I tell her, "You have to do something for them, they are family." This is as important for me as for them. But my daughter is a paradox, I hope that when her turn comes, she will be like me. My daughter is going to be a doctor. She is very ambitious and a good student. She studies in Detroit. She thinks she's independent, but I don't agree. She calls us twice every Sunday. That's how she is. My mother says I spoil her, because I take her morning coffee to her bedroom. Why shouldn't we spoil our children? I am my mother's whole world. Isn't that the way it should be? I believe this way: "These children are part of my life. I have to love them." I never had time for myself since my father died. He used to take the children out on Sundays. He told me, "So you can rest, if you wish, so you can think." But I don't know what I would do with an empty house. My husband's family is very dependent on us. Ever since we got married I was the one who knew English from the university, so I took them everywhere and dropped them off. For me, the family is the most important thing. My husband and I finally took a trip alone to San Francisco—By the second day I was going crazy away from my children. I think he feels the same way. From what I know of Americans, I don't think they have the same need. For them, the most important thing is

competition. I don't see how I will ever be alone, and I don't think I need that. I am used to cooking. Sometimes I ask for help, but not usually.

X. My grandfather was a miner in Mexico. He was blinded by an explosion, and afterwards he played accordion in the streets to earn a living. They were very poor, so my father didn't go to school. He taught himself how to read and write. He said that, as a child, his greatest treasure was a little broken pencil stub. He learned a lot from his jobs. Towards the end he spoke a lot about death. "Why should I be afraid of death? It's not the end of the world." Religion doesn't mean going to church. The most important thing is that we see Christ in each other. For him, that was religion. He never went to church—I went alone ever since childhood. He talked a lot about prejudices. He had suffered that himself. He also loved philosophy. He used to tell me, "Learn to look at the sunset, give yourself time to think about yourself and about God." I knew my father wanted to die in Mexico. When he retired, he bought a car on a Saturday. He planned to leave for Mexico on Monday. That Sunday, he had a heart attack and he died in my husband's arms while I called an ambulance. When I saw that he was dead, I said, "Say hi to Christ for me, dad." For me, his death took the clouds away; I see now that everything he told me was true. When he was young, he had worked in hospitals. I feel that he knew he was going to die, and he preferred to go quickly, in his prime, not depending on anyone, not making us tired with caring for him. After he died, I didn't speak about him for a year. But I couldn't laugh either. I remember the first time I laughed my husband and I were running downhill after a retreat at a church in DeWitt. My father had a great impact on my life. Maybe my mother loved him more, but he could talk to me.

XI. I haven't told you that before my marriage I spent my vacations with my mother at her family home in Saltillo. We went by bus to my grandfather's house. It was a thatched adobe—he had five hundred goats. After milking them, we took them to the hills. I never went back to Mexico after I got married. Our only contact with Mexico was my father's sister, who would telephone us. Although she was very old, she was daring. She hitched rides on motorcycles. My cousin was like his mother. He died in a car accident in Paris. He went there on a trip he won as a prize for selling so much insurance. So he went there and died. The family was like that.

XII. About women's liberation, I believe in equal pay for equal work. But I wouldn't want liberty instead of a husband. It's hard to say what each person should do. My decisions were slow. Everyone has their own reality. I didn't start my career until I was middle-aged. I am happy with my life, because I learned slowly but well.



Rumbo al Norte/ Going North, painting by Nora Mendoza

ROSA

I. My father was born in El Paso, Texas, the youngest of nineteen children. My mother was born in Mexico; she came when she was 9 years old in 1917. My parents had an interesting life but not without problems, that's why they always taught us that you have to live your life fully. Either problems ruin you, or you come out stronger as a result of them. My mother emphasized that the family motto was: "Win or die."

II. My mother talked often about the Mexican Revolution, of all the atrocities that took place there and how they escaped. My father talked about his family life in Texas. But as a child I did not understand that there were two countries. When I was a child, they sent me to a private school in Juarez, at the other side of the bridge. In El Paso they still speak Spanish though it is an American border town. We happen to have families on the two sides of the bridge. When the United States and Mexico were not on friendly terms, the bridge was closed. There was an amusing story in my family: on precisely the day that my father was going to ask my mother's family for her hand the bridge got closed and he couldn't do it. I also remember that the day the States entered the Second World War, the bridge was closed. Still, Mexicans could work in one place and live in the other.

III. My parents were good Catholics, and they wanted to give me an education according to their ideas. So I went to a nun's school in Juares, Mexico for years. Though my parents had gone through many hardships when my older brothers grew up, when I was born they were enjoying financial stability. During the Korean War, my two older brothers were in the army, so they qualified for the G.I. bill, and they became optometrists like my father. I had a very close relationship with my father, especially when he took me for walks and talked to me about the sky and the constellations, and also about world events. Now I wonder, what he got in return from his little girl. Still, thanks to his talks I studied sociology. I wanted to go to the public school in El Paso, for I knew that my father was the first Mexican who graduated from there. Even though it was difficult for me to get there I did it for tradition's sake. In high school I remember the sponsor of the English Club; she was a very good teacher and helped me a lot. In high school one third of the students were Mexicans, there was much racism in Texas in those days. For instance, the Mexican girls could be elected to be princesses, but never queens. Many Mexican boys were good in sports, but could never dream of going to college like now. My parents were bilingual. My father was educated and could be accepted in some circles, but I remember that my best friend's father could not apply to a club because he was a Jew.

IV. My father's life was never easy. He attended the College of Mines in El Paso, then he went to work in Detroit, but he didn't like the cold weather so he got another job. He married my mother, got a job with an American company and went to work in the mines of Sonora, Mexico. After eight years he got sick, very sick, and he couldn't go down into the mines any more. It was then that my parents with my two brothers returned to El Paso. My mother went back to live with her mother so her children would be supervised while she was working as a saleswoman in a store. This was essential, since my father decided to go back to college to study a new career. He went to Southern Illinois College to study Optometry. My parents suffered a great deal during those years, but by the time I was born, my mother was not working any more, and my father was well established in his profession.

V. It was my mother's idea that I should not go to college in El Paso, but in Chicago, where she had sisters. We both went to Chicago, and there she found me a college: Rosary College. Now I understand why she did it, and I give her credit. My father had a domineering personality, so by taking me away to Chicago, my mother made it possible for me to develop my own views. I be-

came a social worker, though my father expected me to become a teacher. I was 22 when I was graduated, and for the first time in my life I had to go alone to some Chicago areas that were segregated racially from the rest. During those years I lived in a very nice area, but my work was in the Mexican and Black neighborhoods. I was not afraid since I always felt a great sense of identity with other Mexicans and minorities. Actually my real problem was how to manage my salary, since I was always tempted to go out to the stores and buy pretty clothing.

VI. They gave me two assignments; adoption and child custody cases. There was a black market of babies, and the position of our country was to make certain that adoption would not be manipulated by lawyers. Also, there were many cases in which the family wished to adopt the child born out of wedlock to a daughter. That way the child was legally provided with all the necessary papers. The child custody cases were the worst. There were many ugly situations. I am still surprised at my intensity and the dedication to do the right thing. My function was to investigate each case and give a report to the judge. Usually the judge followed my recommendation. It was a rewarding experience when the right couple adopted the baby. They would send me a picture of the baby; my desk was full of little babies' pictures. I remember the hard decisions when a baby was sent to a foster home because his home situation was very damaging. I still believe that one does the best one can, and I guess I was just a very determined social worker. I remember that I was in charge of a column in "El Informador," a Spanish language paper. My column was called "Servicio Social." I answered letters, but more often phone calls from people who wanted to know about eligibility in social programs.

VII. During those years, poor people usually remained in their side of the city. Very often I found myself thinking that if I had been born there I could never have crossed that invisible wall. The only cases in which minorities were able to cross that wall was by marrying Anglos. But something took place in the 70's, offices of Economic Progress and Wars Against Poverty Committees were established. My new job was with the Man Power Training. Our first class had one hundred and fifty men; mechanics and welding classes were offered. My job was to make certain that the wives at home would not take time from their husbands' studies. I found myself driving women to the hospital and also doing even more menial tasks. Among our students were many Latin American men, they came well prepared and learned fast. I also observed that the Mexicans' lack of preparation was the result of discrimination. At that time there were jobs in factories, and our students got skilled jobs.

VIII. When I was in Chicago I acted like a professional woman. But when I went back home on vacations, I was a child again. My father was in charge of all decisions. My father did not want my mother to work since he was financially well off. But my mother always found an outlet for her energy. She created a Nativity scene at Christmas which was so extraordinary that Life magazine published photographs. People from the whole region came to see it. She also got first prizes for her roses, she had a beautiful garden. But the most important thing she did was to collect donations for 90 children in the orphanage ward. She excelled within the limits my father drew for her.

IX. I married in 1968; I had known my husband for three years in Chicago. He went to Harvard to get his Master's degree, and I went with him to work as a social worker. I got my Master's degree twelve years later. In Boston, I worked with the Puerto Rican population. We moved to Ohio where my husband did his practice, and I worked for the Employment Security Office. Migrant workers ended their trips in Ohio, and very often they remained there for the winter. They were not made welcome because people said they only came to get welfare. I helped them relocate and helped them with their families. It was then that I realized how deeply impaired they were by the Texan racism.

X. In my family my aunts and grandmother were diabetics. By the time I was thirteen I observed that I was one also. I read

my father's medical books and asked to have a check-up. The doctor gave me a diet that was hard to keep because my mother was a real good cook, and in my house there were many tasty things. It was when I went away to college that I started taking insulin. In the last few years I started losing my sight. What happens is that the diabetes affects the cells in some parts of the body. In my case, it was the eyes. Here in my office in Lansing I have organized all my work so I can do it without my eyes. Fortunately, my husband works nearby, and he drives me every day. I am legally blind, so I took a course in mobility training, and now I can find my way helped by a white cane. I have learned a lot from my parents, and I don't feel defeated for my impairment. On the contrary, I often think that life goes on and on, but it is we who must get stronger with the unsuspected trials we face.

La pisca del tomáte/Picking Tomatoes, by Nora Mendoza

JUANA

I. On my father's side we are from San Luis Potosi, and on my mother's from Guadalajara, although both parents were born in Mexico City. My father's people were all educated; his father taught school. On my mother's side they were miners in Hidalgo. My grandmother's brothers didn't want to share their inheritance with her, so they sent her to live as a serving girl. She worked as a cook for a lady. My grandmother died when my mother was only one. Grandfather was a gambler. After his mourning, he kept on gambling. One day my uncle Celso came and took all the deeds from the box "To keep them safe until your daughter grows up" he said. My grandfather also had many women. In the end he lived with a mixed-blood woman, very industrious, who taught my mother how to work. They had to support the household. One day my grandfather and my mother went to uncle Celso's funeral. It was in a big house with a big orchard. Some old white ladies with blue eyes came out to meet them. They were suspicious that my mother would ask for her inheritance. They didn't give her the deeds. She didn't want money anyway, but she would have liked to have some education.

II. My mother met my father at a dance. After he married her, he took her to live with my grandparents. Those were the days of the Revolution; my parents became merchants. They went to Michoacan, where the Zapatistas were, and they bought sugar, beans, and canned milk. They brought it all to Mexico City by train. One day an American asked my father, "Do you speak English?" My father said yes. So the American told him, "Get back on the train and leave right now, because the troops are coming to kill all the merchants—they think they are spies." So my parents took the children on the train and left. Afterwards we found out that it was true; the American was a reporter, a friend of Zapata, and he saved our lives. The Mexican Revolution was already over. Things were calmer, but the prices were very high. Because of this, my parents with their four children decided to go to San Antonio, Texas, where my father's cousin lived. On April 21, 1924, after three day's travel, we arrived in San Antonio. They told my father that they needed workers up north, so he signed on with a farm labor crew that was going to Michigan on a truck. He could have paid his own way, but he went with the other workers.

III. We will never forget the day we came to Michigan. The snow fell like feathers from the clouds; it was completely new to us. We were cultivating sugar fields, which are like a kind of beet. They put us in some dormitory housing, my mother and I slept on one side, and my father and brothers went on the other side. That was a big change for us—now we were farmers, and we all worked together in the fields. They paid us $12.00 per acre and when the weeding started the Mexican men gave me some good advice; "Stoop right down and only look at what's in front of you." It went much faster that way. My father knew nothing about farm work, he wanted to work in a factory. He bought a car for fifty dollars and we went to Detroit, where he worked as a mechanic. By that time I was used to open spaces, and I didn't like the city. We lived in an area where there were a lot of Poles, Germans, and Italians. My father didn't care where he lived; his house was his kingdom. He used to say, "This house has everything you need—you only have to ask." We started to school in an "Americanization" room where there were Chinese, Italians, Hungarians and Poles. I learned to read in three months, and they put me in a regular class. At home, even if we had problems, we never yelled. We shared all our worries. If somebody needed something like shoes, we all talked it over to decide how to spend what little money there was. My father was fair with all of us.

IV. The Second World War affected all of the women in town. I took work in a factory, where they paid me twenty-three cents an hour. After the war there was more freedom and recognition for women. Before that, all the women lived with their families. Afterwards they got more independent; espe-

cially the Germans and the Poles. In the factory they called me "Spanish Joanne," because there were four other Joannes of different nationalities. We women talked about our lives. Of course, all of them wanted to get married, although they wanted to keep working too. They didn't want to have children too soon—they wanted to save for a house and furniture. But the husbands would just drink up their money. Life was not easy. I didn't want to get married. The depression started in '31; I got my check cashed just before the banks closed up. My mother died during that time. The government paid the hospital bills. I paid the $300.00 for the burial. Two of my brothers have gone back to Mexico. My oldest brother had just died, so I was left alone.

V. I had only known one man all my life; my husband. That's why when I divorced him, I said I would never marry anyone else. I don't want anybody beating my children. I have seen too many men beating women and children.

I met my husband just before my mother died. He took me to visit her. I thought we were friends, although we were very different. We had two children. When he wanted a divorce I had to face the facts that it would be better to separate. I understand that older men are attracted to younger women. She was a divorcee with two children. She told my sister-in-law once, "He's very dark, but he's a good provider." In Mexico the woman belongs in the house, and the man in the street. But here it's different; I always worked. I saved some money my ex-husband sent me for rent. But I earned the rest myself. This way I could educate my children in my own way, without the in-laws interfering. Now I believe love can unite people only if they share the same ideas.

VI. When my health failed, I prayed to God—not to the saints. Ever since I was in Mexico, I haven't trusted religion. Now I'm a Jehovah's Witness. Although there is a Hispanic congregation, I went to the English one because they preach to everyone; not just Hispanic people. My ex-husband never went to church—like the other Mexicans who go only three times in their life—when they are baptized, when they marry, and when they die. Even before my divorce I went to different churches. But in the work of the Jehovah's Witnesses I found what I needed. When we became members they all took interest in me and my children. They even helped my son with his reading problems. Although he went to school and he was ten years old, he didn't understand what he read. After they helped him, he turned out to be an excellent student. There are many people that don't believe in the Devil, or in God either. They kill somebody, and they think they're right. Now I believe what I read in the Scriptures. For instance, that God put Adam in the Garden of Eden so he would work and not be lazy. And also that Eve was of Adam's flesh. That's why he should love her, and not despise her. In this service, there is a close friendship. The people in the congregation help each other more than if we were one family. For us there is no color, no nationality. It's not like that in the other churches in Mexico that are always criticizing each other.

Since 1954 I have been reading about all kinds of philosophy and world religions; Hindu, Rosacrucians, all of them. There was one group that said you could control another person with just your breathing. I have never wanted to control anybody. I have always believed we are all equal and different at the same time, like the fingers of one hand.

ANA

I. My father died when I was six months old. He received a purple heart for fighting in the Korean War. He left us a nice house. We had nice furniture, and my mother gave me nice toys. So my first vision of life was nice. My father had gone to college for two years previously to joining the Army, but at his death my mother married a man who was a laborer and uneducated. I don't know how she can justify this going down the ladder in society. One thing about my mother, although she herself never worked during those years, she always made sure that we all had a lot to eat. On the other hand, she was not prompt about paying bills and taxes. Although my stepfather only made $60.00 weekly, my mother never talked about being poor. My stepfather was not self-assured, and I never have accepted him as my father. Of course he didn't communicate with me, so I treated him as if he was someone who lived in the same house. He had a drinking problem and a violent temper. He threatened to kill my mother almost every week. I sent a younger brother or sister to call the police from a neighbor's phone when he looked like he might be wild enough to do it. I never understood why my mother stayed with him all these years. Was it because of her religious beliefs or because she loved him?

II. I have a brother a couple of years older. Because he was the oldest son, he could eat what my stepfather ate; steak, lettuce, french fries. Because I was a woman, I only ate what the small children ate; beans, tortillas and sopas (arroz, fideo, papas with bitesize pieces of meat or hamburger). Also it was clear I couldn't be late in the street, but my brother could. I never grew up too close to him. He used to hit me also. One day, he ordered me to wash the dishes; I was reading, and I didn't obey him. He hit me and hit me, but I didn't move. Finally he cried and told me he was sorry. I also resented the fact that my mother built my oldest brother a home in the back yard to save him from witnessing the violence. He was going to college. I shared a room with my younger brothers and sisters. We were nine children altogether. My brother had his own place and the rest of the family lived in the two bedroom home that my real father left us. My brother recommended that I go to college, but I never listened to him. Since the times in which I wrote poetry in 7th grade and he told me that it wasn't any good, I didn't listen to him anymore.

At that time I only cared about my grandmother. She treated me special. She would cook for me and slept with me. She lived with my grandfather far away. Unfortunately, I only visited her in the summer.

III. My mother has nine children; my brother and I from the first marriage, and afterwards she had seven more children with my stepfather. She sometimes used contraceptives. I guess she did it because she knew we were very poor, and she could not afford any more children. Yet she always seemed to enjoy having a large family.

Ten years ago Mexican women had large families, but today the new Mexican women would rather have three children if possible. I think that women are more aware of their economic limitations. Also, nowadays it is more common for Hispanic women to get a divorce, and when they can't afford to support their children, they turn to welfare.

I grew up thinking that women were just housewives. My mother didn't work, yet I still took care of my brother and sister from the second marriage. When I finished high school, I was a good secretary, and I started working in order to contribute to the household. I made $110.00 monthly, and my mother took half. (This was when I attended Nixon Clay Business College in Austin, Texas. I got the $110.00 from the government because my father died in the war.) So with $55.00 I had to buy clothes, pay my busfare and personal expenses. All during those years, my mother had been using also $40.00 that corresponded to me from my father's pension. On top of that I had to give her half of the money I was earning. The day I told her I was going to get married, she asked for $500.00 from the money that was waiting for me after I turned eighteen years old, my father's pension money. I guess she thought

that since I was not going to contribute to the household anymore I should give that much to the family. For a long time I have thought that my mother didn't care about me. I did not resent giving her the $500.00, but it was my way of ending the first part of my life.

IV. I started very young in the Catholic church. I attended catechism classes religiously each week. But I went to a public school through the ninth grade. I remember that in the 6th grade I got A's. I was in plays; I knew I could do anything I wanted. I had social support at school, but not at home. I remember that in junior high I was very popular, I was selected secretary of the class. In the 8th grade we moved to Galveston; it was very hard. I became aware of racism, I was one of two brown faces in the class. I never saw black faces. They went to segregated schools.

Since I was very unhappy in Galveston, I had an outlet. I thought I could only socialize with the rejects; the fat and ugly, the handicapped. When we moved back to Austin, Texas the next year, I told my mother that I wanted to go to a Catholic school. So finally she agreed. She used to go to the bank to get my father's Social Security check for my school and books. So I completed my education in a Catholic school.

During that time I started talking to a priest. At that point I was very uncomfortable with people. However, I was made President of the Legion of Mary, and then I began to develop leadership. We visited hospitals, and the priest loaned me his car. He was a Spanish speaking Anglo priest working for the Hispanic neighborhood. In those years I liked to read biographies. I admired Joan D'Arc because she was such a great leader. I also liked Saint Teresa because of her will power and her great love for God. Very often in my childhood I wondered how my life would have been if my father would not have died. There were no pictures of my father in the house because my stepfather was jealous of him. I imagined my father the way I wanted. I have heard that he was a very humorous and warm man, so I had some idea of his character. I missed my father's presence. Still I was proud of him because he died in the war and nobody could tell me that I was a Mexican and not an American citizen.

I never had enough money to go out like other working girls, nor was I allowed to have visitors because my mother was ashamed of the house. So I stayed home and kept myself busy doing some creative things. I often experimented with different makeups and mixed up colors, or else, I did lots of daydreaming. In any case, my communication was within myself.

V. I had an interesting boyfriend in the 4th grade. I met the one who was going to be my husband in my senior year in high school. Antonio never visited me at home, and my stepfather was never anxious to meet him. Antonio was more religious than I was. He was a very demonstrative Catholic, he prayed the rosary kneeling. He was a Mexican immigrant, a greencard holder. We went together for three years before I put it to him that either we were going to get married or go our own separate ways. In loyalty and fidelity his behavior was not consistent with his Catholic beliefs. When I found out that he had been dating thirteen months after we got married I was shocked. When it came to finding out things I was a great investigator. I knew what he was doing when he didn't come home. He never took me out, and I thought I would never survive that period of my life.

VI. We went to an advisor, a marriage counselor. I was really trying to hold on to the marriage. I told the counselor I wasn't going to bother anymore if he was not breaking off with his girlfriend. He was very hypocritical. At first I was very nice, I tried to be sympathetic. That was my style, I really was in love. I really didn't want to leave him, but I had to because he wasn't going to stop cheating on me. The last thing I tried (although I didn't believe in it) was seeing a "curandera" (witch). It was against my moral principles. She was more of a cult type of person, she asked me to say a prayer, and it was supposed to be full of anger to the Restless Spirit. I asked her, "Who is he?" She told me "He owes some good things so he has to go on doing good things." I decided that I didn't want to say that prayer with anger. I told her "Say it on my behalf." There were very strange things, she told me that there was Black Magic and White Magic

and that my husband was frequenting a Black Magic person. I was desperate when I tried this "curandera." Before I would have never tired to go to see one although there was one in my area. When I decided to get a divorce, my moral dilemma was leaving the church or staying in a rotten marriage. I came to the conclusion that I had tried many times to stay in the church, and I had consulted several priests about my problems. Since they had not solved my problems, they had to understand my decision. So I opted for the divorce. I had to ask myself a question, "Where do I go?" I had lived in Texas all my life. I was born in Galveston, but I grew up in Austin, Texas. I also lived in Laredo, Texas (on the border) during the last three years of my marriage. I had taken secretarial courses. My idea of going into the secretarial field was: if my husband was going to die or be disabled, I would be prepared to earn my living. My marriage was going to be forever, but it did not work that way. During my marriage years I worked, but it was not a supplementary income, it was supposed to be extra, but it turned out to be necessary. That wasn't what I had intended. I had worked for six years as a secretary while I was married and I knew I couldn't support my family alone, not without going on welfare, and not without being poor. My husband moved out of the house we rented and moved in with the woman he was dating.

I went to my brother in San Antonio. He owns some drugstores, and he is wealthy; he got his college free because of my father's Social Security allowance and became a pharmacist. He was my only immediate relative I had left in Texas. So I went to his house with my three small children. He told me, "I hope you don't plan to stay long because I can't stand crying children." So I left San Antonio.

VII. My mother, stepfather, half brothers and half sisters were migrant farm workers for four years. They moved to Michigan with the $500.00 I gave them five years before. At the time I considered moving to Michigan. My stepfather was working for Davis and my mother for Hunt pickles. When I called them from Laredo they offered to come to get me. They helped me to move my furniture. I say "my furniture" because I bought it with my work money.

VIII. No man has ever bought me anything. At that time I was afraid that my husband would try to take the children away. During that time, because of the commotion, I didn't have my menstrual period, and I was afraid also. Fortunately he was not interested in the children. He had the woman he married afterwards, and that's all he wanted. Now I was a divorcee in Michigan. I worked for a year in the Biology Department of a college. It was a low paying job. I was on food stamps, and I was getting child support. I didn't like my standard of living. I had begun learning about the political movement of Hispanic minorities. I had become involved in the Civil Rights movement of the early 70's. If there was rebelliousness in me it showed itself at that time. I would rather say; if I really care about something, why don't I do something about it? In the early 70's when I got in the Raza Unida, there were a lot of confrontations and hatred of whites. I began to work at some practical things. I produced a community newsletter for Hispanics. We helped Spanish farmers. I took the role of confronting the system.

I approached the college for a scholarship, completely free. In my freshman year I did pretty well. I remember that when I was in high school a nun had said we should consider college if we had more than a B grade. I had a B average, I could have even gotten a scholarship right after high school since my father was a dead veteran. Unfortunately, at that time college was not one of my aspirations. I thought from what the nun had said that I might not be accepted, I found out many years later that was not true.

IX. I was recruited to write at a Hispanic newspaper, I worked there for a year and a half. I was paid $9,000 in 1972, and that was really good, but it was a frustrating job. I didn't have any creative authority to decide what was going in the paper. I began to follow the politics of the town where I was living to get an internship on the big paper. Finally, I was interviewed, and I was all prepared. I had brought along all my clippings, and articles I had published. Fortunately, one of the editors who interviewed me had taught a course I had taken. He knew what I could do. I had also worked on the political side of issues and so I got the job.

For three months I was working at the minimum wage twenty hours a week. That was my internship, I did lots of rewrites. I did 3 front page stories, after that I was hired. I was involved in one of the biggest stories of the year, an award winning story: "The Big Robbery of the Local Church." They had stolen food stamps from there, and raped an employee. I happened to have gone there, and I called the paper, and they sent me more reporters and photographers. I was the only person who could speak Spanish. That was basically how I began. In the training program I had to figure out what to do, how to put the information in an article. I was writing as fast as I could, as much as I could.

I was hired as a permanent member of the staff three months later. Now I am the chief education reporter. I cover the K-12 school system. There is lots of news, I like what I am doing. I choose most of the topics for my stories. I have to compete with the TV news, so I do my best to give a good story.

X. I have a half sister I really admire. It is true that when we were growing up she resented me and was jealous because I had better clothes. If you think about it, I only had 5 outfits, but I really took good care of my clothes. Also she was heavier set and I was thin. But now we get along very well. She is a cosmetologist, but she became one, only many years after she was married. At the beginning she had a very oppressive marriage, but her husband suffered a major accident, and he became more considerate. Recently she told me, "I can't be a manager of a beauty shop because I really..." "Nonsense," I said, and I encouraged her to become one.

I also see lots of women that have the same American dream as the Anglos. These women realize that if they don't have a man they have to provide for themselves. I grew up thinking a place of work was not a place to enjoy. I thought the purpose was to provide for your family needs. I also thought you had to work well because otherwise it was dishonest to collect a salary. But I realize that now work can also be a personal satisfaction. Now I am self-supporting without child support. Actually, I raised the kids on my pay. I only received child support for five years, and despite my efforts, child support was not enforced by the courts in my case.

I feel I have accomplished a lot in the area of politics. I am in the Women's Commission, and I am also President of an Hispanic Women's Organization. I have seen the effects of the Organization on people. I organized the Latin Art Festival, and I really want to add a touch of quality to the activities I organize.

Las "piscas"/Working in the Fields, by Nora Mendoza

ELOISA

I. The first thing I remember from grade school is that I liked drawing. I was ambitious. I gave lessons to my classmates for a penny or a nickel. I have five older brothers and five younger brothers. When people needed boys for Mexican dances, they came to my home and took one of my brothers so I went along. By the time I was 8 or 9 I was taking dancing lessons myself. I never felt intimidated by being the only girl in a household full of boys, somehow I always felt in control. I was never scared to fight with my brothers, especially the ones nearest my own age. I wasn't sure if I was going to win when we had to have physical fights, but at home I was never made to feel scared.

II. In grammar school I got a lot of attention as far as achievement goes. At that time there were more Anglos in the "area." I was a leader, and the principal of the school put me in charge of many school activities. It was a fantastic experience. My mother then was not like she is now, she was not my role model then. She was not working when I went to school. It was the girls who were at the top of the class, Patty and Sally, that I wanted to copy. By my junior year my mother became active in many things. It was then that she influenced me the most. I am thankful to her because, since I was a child, she did not treat me any differently from the way she treated the boys. What was good for them was good for me. As a matter of fact, I got a car before my brothers did. I was 17, and I had mobility to go from one meeting to another meeting, as long as I called home and told my mother where I was.

I was aware of the traditional role of the Mexican women. It was a pet peeve with me that men could do what women couldn't. So I didn't go out with guys that did not treat me as an equal. If I didn't take it at home, why should I take it outside?

III. When I was 14, my mother put me in a Catholic high school. It was a matter of social standing. In my other school I was at the top of my society, but in that high school I was at the bottom. They were rich Anglos, and I knew we didn't have any money. Maybe my mother thought I would get a better education, but I would have given anything to get out of that school. Perhaps my mother wanted to bring me up as an Anglo. My mother had to scrape. I am not sure how she did it. The confrontation was great. Possibly it was a learning experience, but I was frustrated. After four years I started participating in dramatic activities, but still the school was segregated; boys in one building, and girls in the other. I was put in the college track after they tested me, so I knew somehow that I would go to college. My parents did not know enough to get financial assistance and they paid everything.

IV. I took courses at the community college. There I met my husband. I pursued a degree in psychology because at that time I never thought I would make money with my dancing. He joined the service, so we moved to San Diego. We lived there for two years. They were very happy years; I got pregnant, I took more dancing classes. I bloomed. My husband is an Anglo with English and Irish background. Now he speaks Spanish, plays the guitar and gives me all the encouragement I need in my dancing school. He has a college degree in anthropology, so he is sensitive to people from other cultures. I also have a more open mind and attitude now; my philosophy is to treat people with the same respect regardless of their social class. People in church were so hypocritical, they taught me so many things that were not right. Being raised a Catholic in a Protestant country I had to change. In that respect the change has helped me to grow.

V. Then I came back from San Diego—I wonder why? I hate cold winters, but somehow I knew that if I had to make a mark I'd have to make it here. I consider myself a professional dancer, and children in my school pay for their lessons. Nowadays Hispanics have a double consciousness—they are both Hispanics and Anglos. They want to learn more about their origins, dancing and

languages. My dream is to have a center for the arts with all the crafts and drama and everything. I still realize that Hispanic children have cultural problems, especially if they don't speak English, but it is important to keep them off the streets. It takes time to overcome differences and to adapt. Meanwhile, anything that occupies them and gives them hope is helpful. Art does this! Every experience, every new job, every new person that you meet, opens your mind to a new world. One person may come just to learn how to dance and he gets more confidence. The more confident they are the better off they are. I won a grant so now I can go to Mexico and participate in the Ballet Folklorico and take more lessons myself. I told my mother that my dream was to have a 25-year-old body with a 50-year-old mind. If I could reach that goal, I could understand human life. Now I have some freedom to travel. If I have to go my husband and mother take care of my son. He is 11 so he knows how to take care of many things. My father was a number-one Machoman, so I had to assert myself sometimes just to make a point. I did that with my brothers and with females too. I try to treat people as people, not like men and women. I have a reputation for being egotistical, snobbish. But all I want to do is grow. I realize that whatever you do, you do within the limits of society. So if you drink a lot, or don't take baths, you're breaking some basic rules. But the more things you experience in life, the better able you are to handle different situations.

SUSANA

I. There were eleven children in our family. I was in the middle, and I had to work hard to get my parents' attention. When my oldest sisters got married I became the oldest one left at home. I took care of my brothers so mother could work for an American woman. My father worked in the fields.

At home we spoke Spanish because my grandmother and my cousins lived with us. But at school in Weslaco, Texas they told us, "You are in the United States—you have to learn English." I had problems at school, and at home I got punished when I didn't speak Spanish. I never got good grades until the sixth grade. I had a teacher who encouraged me—she was beautiful and understanding. She took time with me. All the students in the school were Mexicans, and all the teachers were Anglos except for two: Mr. R. and Miss L. He was my father's cousin. He made fun of me in front of everybody; he told me, "Don't put on airs. I know where you come from." Miss L. was the traditional spinster; she used to tell me, "You will never amount to anything." I asked her why. "Because you use makeup, and you're only eleven," I have always tried to prove that they were wrong. I always needed to test my strength. I wanted to go on to high school, but my parents said, "Look at your sisters; to become a mother you don't need a diploma." When I was fourteen, I already had a fiance, and I was afraid I would do exactly what my sisters did. I insisted that I wanted to finish school. My mother is a very strong and domineering woman; I respect her and fear her. When she realized that I really wanted to improve myself through education, she gave me her support. I learned a lot from her, carpentry, gardening—she's always go-go-go. Each year we left school in May to join the migrant stream. I was ashamed of that. I told my classmates that we were going on vacation to visit my sister in Chicago. Of course they knew the truth. It was a small town. But we tried to "cover up" anyway. I have always wanted to move up.

II. I graduated when I was eighteen. I told my parents, "Now I can work at a better job." But everybody told me, "You're a woman now, why don't you get married?" I felt trapped, because what I really wanted was a good job. I said to myself, "I've got everything going for me." My fiance wanted to get married though, before he went to Vietnam with the Marines; it was 1966. I gave in. But now my mother didn't want me to get married. So we eloped. When he left for Vietnam, I came back home. (Two years later we had a church wedding when he came home.) That summer, I went with my parents to work in the fields again. Halfway up north, I told them, "I'm going to find some other job." My sister and brother-in-law helped me to find a job cleaning houses for American women. It was a new experience, entering a new world.

When my husband returned from Vietnam, we went to San Clemente, California. He still had two more years to serve with the Marines. I worked as a motel maid. They gave us a free room, and I cleaned twenty rooms. One day the cashier ran off with all the money. The owner of the hotel called me from another town, and asked me to be the new manager. She still didn't pay me any salary, but I got a bigger apartment. I was very happy. I always worked very hard, that never bothered me—I wanted to have responsibility.

III. My husband didn't want to change his way of life; his parents had been migrant workers, too. When he got out of the service, we went back to our home town, and to our old ways. I got pregnant then. I tried to tell myself, "I have my husband, my child, my home, a car—I guess I should be happy." We were there two more years, but I was never satisfied. There was a federal project for job training, and I took an accounting class. I was second in my class, even though the others had experience. I got a job in a bank. It was a different kind of job. I never had to get my hands dirty. Now my husband was jealous. I was mixing with all the "higher-ups." I got mad, and I said, "Why don't you take advantage of your veteran's benefits and finish high school?" It took a lot of doing, and everyone said I was pushing him. My in-laws did not accept the

change. When he got his diploma, he became a patrolman on the police force; I was very proud. But it didn't last. There was a police strike, and he struck too. All of them were fired. No more job. He began driving trucks. He worked nights. I felt like an outcast, and blamed myself for all our problems. I got pregnant again, and we went to Corpus Christi to live. I got a job as a telephone operator. I was very happy—I could dress well, and be with people again.

IV. We came to Lansing for a wedding. Everyone said my husband could get a factory job, but it wasn't that easy. In the meantime, my third child was born here, so here we stayed. My husband joined the National Guard, and I got a part-time job with a Spanish newspaper. The cashier disappeared with the money again, and I became general manager. In 1978 there was a grant available from the University for a project to help migrant workers. I began working with that office, and I also took courses at the University. By now, my husband had a good job, and he insisted that I stay home, although our children were at school all day. We had a two-story house, so when I wouldn't obey him, he moved downstairs, and I lived upstairs with the children. He was good at keeping up appearances. So when his parents came from Texas to visit us, he pretended we were still on good terms. This arrangement was easy because he worked nights, and I worked days; we never saw each other anyway. But we still fought on weekends, and talked about getting a divorce. I told him, "You can keep the house, but I'll keep the children." He said, "You're going to fail, and you will beg me to take you back when you need me."

V. I was afraid to fail. I had never made any major decisions before. My parents raised me with so many rules; "Don't skate because you'll break your leg, —Don't go swimming, you might drown." I knew they were just excuses because we couldn't afford to do these things. But it still made me afraid. I kept repeating to myself, "Keep your job, keep your children, keep your confidence up." Fortunately, at work they were very understanding. Lupita, for instance, would come over and say, "Love yourself, woman—I'm here so you can scream, you can act crazy, but always love yourself."

VI. I realized that I was having problems with the children, because from the beginning my husband had been the authority figure. The children weren't used to obeying me, so I had to start there. They also went through a crisis: Stage 1: The misery, the suffering of seeing their parents constantly quarreling. Stage 2: The shock; no more fighting. The accusation: "You don't love Daddy anymore, so you don't love us." (I looked for support groups of women who had similar problems.) Stage 3: The crisis is over. Now we can communicate again.

But I realized that I would have to raise my children alone. I felt happy that at least I could raise them with my own values. For instance: my husband always said, "When the children are 18, it's out to work they go." I don't think that way. I want them to get an education; I began work in a factory so I could double my salary and provide for my children. I learned that job quickly. Three months later, when I could join the union, I went to the foreman and asked, "How do I move up the ladder?" He was surprised; "Huh?" But I took the training and got a promotion, now I always say, "Look at me as a worker—not as a Chicana, not as a woman. Just as a worker."

Madre e hijo/Mother and Child, by Nora Mendoza

EMMA

I. My first memory is our home in Crystal City, Texas. My father was a foreman there. I also remember my mother wetting down the patio and all the children sliding on it. At that time, I had three older brothers and I was the only girl. Now I am the oldest sister of four girls and have eight brothers. I don't remember our trip to Michigan, but I remember my grandfather and oldest brother working with my uncle and cousins in the migrant camps.

II. In Lansing we were put in a Catholic private school. We were the only Mexicans there. We didn't know any English, and it was very difficult for us to learn it on our own. The nuns were good to me, but they did not like my brothers and punished them quite frequently; not because they acted up, but I think out of frustration and not knowing how to deal with someone who only spoke Spanish. The nuns didn't know how to communicate with them. At home I helped raise my brothers and sisters.

We changed schools in Junior High. I liked my new school a lot. There was social life. I still have friends from those days. One of them works for me. I also liked the school because the teachers cared about us, even though the classes were large. My home was very far from the school, so we had to take school buses. As for our social life after school hours, we always managed to get a ride. I had very good girl friends, both Mexican and Anglos. I felt closer to the Mexicans. Maybe at that time I realized that I had to fight if I wanted to survive, as they did too.

One thing that I thought was very strange at that time was to hear the way Anglo kids talked about their parents. They didn't have any respect. Also they got into drugs and sex, which was not familiar to me. I never thought I wanted to do those things; it wasn't for me.

We went to the Cristo Rey Church. The first one was on Main St., the second one on Ballard, and the third one is on Washington St. I was glad that our parents took us to a Spanish church, that way we could mix with other Mexicans. My father always thought about what was best for our education; for example, he moved to another house so we could go to better public schools. At that time I thought of going to college and taking it from there. I never thought I would be doing what I am doing now.

III. When I started at MSU I moved to the dormitories; I got a scholarship and I also got loans. I have paid all my loans now. It was a pretty tough change. My mother thought she was losing me because I, the oldest girl, was leaving home. Even though the university is not too far from my home...only five miles. Still I had to go home on weekends, for a while. I realized that for the first time I was independent and all by myself. I also had a boyfriend, R., an Anglo. I had met him while I was shopping. He didn't interfere with my studies because he worked days as a salesman; however, I lost communication with my roommates because I spent lots of time with him outside of the University. There was a Chicano Club at the University where I met lots of Mexicans, but I was already in love with R. At that time he had two monkeys in his house and I loved to help him in the chores of cleaning the cages and feeding the monkeys. We became very close like a family. Although my mother tried to share with me her point of view, she really didn't approve of my boyfriend; however, no one got in my way.

IV. I went two years to college then I stopped and got a job. I realized that my parents had sacrificed a great deal so that all of us could go to school. My loans were getting bigger and bigger, and I thought I could not pay them if I continued studying. My quitting school was a disappointment for my parents. But I got a good job at the Credit Union and there I learned some banking skills. I became well qualified for clerical jobs. I started working for my boyfriend at nights making phone calls for his business. Later on I went to work for him. I moved into my own apartment, and R. had his. We never moved into the same house in the eleven years we had been going together. It

would make me uncomfortable with my parents, or maybe I had never really cared about living with anyone in those conditions. We have talked about marriage, maybe some years ago I wanted to marry him, but now things have changed for us. It is true that we have good times, but we also have bad times. I don't think things would change if we got married.

V. The relationship with my boyfriend put me through several changes. It made me strong because I didn't want to be dependent on him. R. bought the business in 1975, and I have been working for him for the last five years. Now I am going to buy the business from him, and he will be working for me in what he likes best; selling. He doesn't want the responsibility of the whole business. But now I am well prepared to take care of all the details. It is difficult to mix love with business and there are many pressures. I think that this is one reason why we live apart. I come here and get away. Now there are ten people working in the business of water treatment systems. People in the cities don't think it is important, but rural people really need them. There are many chemical dumps that get in the water supply and lots of people get sick. The water treatment system takes the impurities from the water. Now I am tapping into a number of new people that are interested in ecological matters. I have learned a lot about people in my business. I do most of my work over the phone, and I have to check credit ratings on future customers. Then I make appointments and send the salesman to meet the clients and installer to install the systems. I also have an accountant. She is my brother P's girlfriend now, and they both live with me in my house. At the time I bought the house I thought I could move the business into the basement, however, realized we had a water problem in the basement. At that point it was out of the question. Besides, the present location of the business is better. Now I am living with my brother, his girlfriend, and my dog, she goes wherever I go. She is seven years old. I can live completely alone, without relatives, and it would not bother me. After all, everyone I know is nearby in town. It is true that I was raised with many brothers and sisters, but somehow I am not anxious to have children or live with an extended family. I've taken many dance classes; modern, folk ballet, and jazz since I was a child. I also like to lift weights, and I have close friends from my high school years that I enjoy spending time with. I always thought of becoming a professional dancer, but that changed when I decided to buy my business.

VI. Nobody in my family had interfered in my lifestyle. They are understanding, even with my sister who had lived with a boyfriend for seven years. Since we were children my father made us know what is good and what is bad. He never got on us because we made a mistake. My mother is very passive; she is still my best friend. I also have two very close brothers in my family. Still there were times when my life wasn't going too well. Then I did not want them to see me in an emotional state, so I stayed away.

I am still a shy girl; my boyfriend is very strong and determined. He was a football player and a weight lifter, so, somehow I always wanted to compete with him. I think I could do it twice as well as he does it. Still I love him very much. Probably that's what makes it hard for me to break it off. When I get sentimental I want him to come back. I don't like the double standard at all. And that is something I cannot put up with. But when I get jealous, then I think "I am not married to the guy, I don't have any rights on his personal life." I now realize that he likes all the qualities of my personality and my culture. I am very loyal and he has been my only boyfriend. I was really in love with him and didn't care about anybody else. I really wanted him badly, but now I think I would like to meet someone else. Still, I have not met any man yet that I want to be with that could make up for what I would lose not being with him.